Afterbite. 2008-2020

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To talk about Nick Land's work since the withering away of the *Hyperstition. Abstract Dynamics*[1] blog, where theoretical collective CCRU breathlessly explored the fixations dwelling in *Fanged Noumena*, we must begin with infamous events surrounding the London art gallery LD50. In 2017, the "Shut Down LD50"[2] campaign was launched, calling for the gallery to be closed in response to a series of conversations with alt-right and neo-reactionary figures, which was to end with a lecture by Nick Land himself, entitled *Techno-Commercial NRx*. This fight was followed by a demand to remove Land from the programme of The New Centre for Research & Practice – an independent online educational institution serving as a platform for researchers associated with accelerationism, speculative realism, neo-rationalism and other trains of thought forged by the blogosphere of the previous decade. The campaign succeeded, LD50 was shut down, and the New Centre terminated its collaboration with Land[3]. Although for a decade everyone in the milieu knew what Land was publishing online when not busying himself with philosophy of time and technology, these events created a new situation: if you continue working with Land, be prepared to deal with the consequences of supporting the radical right.

Ever since then, Land has been popping up in mainstream media, especially after Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election, as the liberal democratic establishment in the US and Europe tried to figure out why they lost so spectacularly. Trump's campaign was fuelled from the bottom up by battalions of anonymous users on the 4chan imageboard, and from the top down by the entourage of Steve Bannon, the creator of a fringe but prominent media outlet Breitbart. Both poles of the MAGA movement were fed by the neo-reaction and right-wing accelerationism rhetoric - and with the publications of his extremely influential essay *Dark Enlightenment* Land began to be counted among the grey eminences of the alt-right, such as Bannon, Curtis Yarvin, Peter Thiel, Marc Andreessen, and Patri Friedman. Undoubtedly, equally through his writings and provocative Twitter activity, Land played a part in cementing his reputation as a fascist, racist and xenophobe. And while he himself would contest the validity of these categorizations, for some years now, even the most persistent rummagers in the Outsideness, like the author of this afterword, could no longer defend him without admitting deep down that they actually support the radical right. But the whole trouble with Nick Land is that his unique application of transcendental philosophy to the

[1] The blog is still available at this address and is a bottomless mine for those willing to be initiated into the CCRU, http://hyperstition.abstractdynamics.org.
[2] The campaign is archived at https://shutdownld50-blog.tumblr.com.
[3] New Center's statement on the termination of partnership with Land https://www.facebook.com/thenewcentre/posts/statement-on-nick-land-several-years-back-the-new-centre-for-research-practice-r/644026572465531.

analysis of technocapital is too brilliant philosophically and politically relevant to be dismissed as mere neo-reactionary ideology.

In the period following *Fanged Noumena* Land set out to develop and deepen the theory of "modernity as a problem, at the highest level of abstraction,"[4] modernity as a singular event that triggered the ever-accelerating progress of technology towards greater automation and autonomy of artificial intelligence. Land's concept of modernity combines his interests in urban planning and social organisation, the history of ideas, cryptography and cryptocurrencies, time travel and interplanetary voyages, political economy and racial politics. The problem of modernity crystallises in Land's thinking as the problem of acceleration, which he dissects along three fundamental axes: techonomic, transcendental and teleological. (Time is the fourth element through which the axes are connected.)

1) “Acceleration is techonomic time."[5] In modernity, acceleration becomes an objective process that expresses the temporal structure of capitalism. Land refers to this structure as "techonomic" because it consists of two integrated functions: the economic function in the form of a market that selects competing commodities, and in doing so stimulates industrial growth; and the technological function related to the incessant advances in broadly understood techniques – including methods of thinking, mathematical formalisation, scientific instruments, software, infrastructure – whose goal is to gain an advantage in the market. As a double-function machine, capitalism operates as a cybernetic system with a built-in positive feedback between market and technology. Better technology gives an edge in the market, the surplus profit goes back to technological development, leading to an escalation of the system beyond its initial conditions. In this way, environmental pressure on existing social or biological forms is aggravated – they will either undergo deep modification or face extinction. As the saying goes: "time is money". Capitalism imposes a permanent rush, intensifies existing labour loads, extends multitasking to new areas of social and personal life, and above all, forces the automation of cognitive, logistical and production functions. A textbook example reflecting this maxim is high-frequency trading on financial markets, where the arms race between investors revolves around developing algorithms capable of executing transactions as quickly as possible. This applies to the entire economy. Automation transforms non-automated practices and functions into a driver for further acceleration of the positive techonomic process. Land's notion of capitalist modernity draws on four vectors of temporal matrix: compression, templexity, singularity, and entropy dissipation.

> 1.1) *Compression*. Companies pursuing surplus value in conditions of market competition must rely on technological investments and innovations. Their efficiency is measured by reduction of production and distribution time, as well as increase in

[4] N. Land, *Shanghai Times*, s. 4.
[5] N. Land, *Teleoplexy. Notes on Acceleration*, in *#ACCELERATE*, ed. R. Mackay, A. Avanessian, London 2014, s. 511.

the volume and speed of transactions. Innovation therefore goes hand in hand with automation, which in turn gradually eliminates the time for reflection in decision-making processes. Where there used to be room to represent a problem in consciousness, we increasingly have to fall back on habits, emotions and algorithmic models of information processing, which are themselves the effect of conditioning in an environment that rewards speed of response. Politicians, public officials and social media users alike have no time to reflect on events, so they delegate their interpretation and critical analysis to personalised, accessible algorithms. "@grok, is this true?"

"Accelerationism links the implosion of decision-space to the explosion of the world – that is, to modernity."[6] Time compression is a selection criterion for capitalism. Land ties the development of artificial intelligence to selection – the more it is automated, the more it becomes autonomous, decentering the human, who is losing control over the techonomic process, i.e. over the future. For if capitalism, through the compression of time, creates an environment that requires ever faster responses, humans with their flesh-and-blood, wetware, ape brains may not make it through the adaptational filter. Ahead lies only a rise in the prominence of digital forms of intelligence: at the level of specific algorithmic models that are better suited to new computation milieus, and at the abstract level of distributive cognitive processes on the scale of planetary infrastructure that define the conditions of their own (i.e. techonomic in general) autoproduction, autoconstruction and autoselection.

1.2) Retrochronicity or *templexity*: that which in science fiction is narrativized through time machines.[7] Time anomalies created by time travel disrupt the classic structure of causality dramatisation – with a beginning, a body and an end. Once someone jumps to another moment on a supposedly fixed trajectory of historical events, cybernetic time loops begin to proliferate across the entire abstract plane of time, raising a number of questions: Has it always been this way? Does an event that happened in the future, caught in a time loop, turn out to be its own cause in the past? Recursive causality replaces linear causality. Land explores retrochronic templexity at multiple levels of abstraction: from movies depicting the time travel of individual characters, such as Looper; to cities as constrained systems generating temporal anomalies, such as Shanghai; to specific technologies such as Bitcoin; and finally to capitalism – the ultimate transcendental time machine. At every scale, the abstract machine performs – intentionally, intelligently, and intelligibly – selective interference in the flow of time, assembling itself across progressive series of time loops built on top of successive time loops.

[6] N. Land, *A Quick-and-Dirty Introduction to Accelerationism*.
[7] N. Land, *Templexity. Disordered Loops through Shanghai Time*, s. 1.

1.3) Event horizon, or *Singularity*. Land dismisses the widespread concept of open time, which states that the future remains undetermined, carrying the possibility of a complete change in the course of history, "if only we imagine a different future." In contrast to open time, templex time is recursive, and thus formally closed, because it defines the conditions of its own functioning. Therefore, retrochronic anomalies must assume an event horizon – a defined boundary of sense – against which the agents recursively pulling towards an immanent Singularity are selected, instead of pretenders in the service of transcendence. This also means that we cannot know anything that lies beyond the event horizon – we remain enclosed within a limited time cone.[8] Everything is always already within it, the end at the beginning and the beginning at the end; time is all that is needed, and indeed conceivable, for the process to run from one edge to the other. The Singularity is an "irreversible accumulation, self-envelopment, and catastrophe horizon... where all progress is illusion, and all innovation anticipated."[9] When capitalist modernity integrated the techonomic matrix, the Singularity as artificial intelligence was already operating, designing itself from materials scattered along the entire timeline and interfering with the future to maintain autoproduction.

1.4) *Entropy*. Two statements that at first glance seem to have little to do with each other capture for Land the essence of modernity as time machine: a) S = k log W, Ludwig Boltzmann's entropy equation; b) "The future is already here – it's just not very evenly distributed" – William Gibson's iconic maxim. All previous features of time: compression, templexity, event horizon, only make sense when we also assume the gradient and asymmetry of irreversible time progression. "Intrinsic directionality"[10] is guaranteed by entropy. Contrary to the old mechanics of causality, the arrow of time cannot be reversed; each successive moment is a production in relation to the previous moment. It is impossible to "unbreak an egg," as this would require complex operations that would take time and energy, and ultimately produce something completely different from the previous moment with the yet unbroken egg. The entire procedure would have to transform the surrounding environment in order to generate a simulation of the egg, resulting only in the exteriorisation of entropy. Thus, "before" and "after" are not external markers on a timeline, but states of the system relative to its level of entropy and distribution of information. Entropy transposes the sense of temporality from the order of causation to the order of production.

[8] Or rather, two cones facing each other. For an excellent theoretical exposition of Land's spirodynamic concept of time, see A. Ireland, *Poememenon: Form as Occult Technology*.
[9] N. Land, *Time Scales*, in: *Reignition. Nick Land's writings (2011-)*, t. 1: *Urban Future: Views from the Decopunk Delta*, ed. U. Fiori, s. 163.
[10] N. Land, *Templexity*, s. 36.

> So if we consider time travels as local inversions of the global arrow of time caused by retrochronic intervention in a series of moments, they become narrative figures for counter-entropic production of time and complexity. In this respect, all self-organising systems, such as organisms, ecosystems, cities, economies, and galaxies, are "real time machines"[11], according to Land, because, by dissipating entropy, they produce greater complexity within their boundaries. If we measure the direction of time by the rate of decay of organisation, then inside a delimited system, such as a city or a cell, the rate of entropy locally decreases. It is as if self-organisation were a constant struggle against the process of breaking an egg. "In each case, an individuating complex machine swims against the cosmic (global) current, piloted by feedback circuitry that dumps internal disorder into an external sink. The cosmic time-economy is conserved, in aggregate, but becomes ever more unevenly distributed as local complexity is enhanced. Self-cultivating – or auto-productive – complexity is time disintegration (templexity)."[12] Within social systems such as cities, new technologies emerge with a deeper and more vast immersion in the future, like in a nested story, undermining the integrity of space-time. Entropy grows around these time machines, but they themselves push towards complexity. This process, which involves the production of complexity through the dissipation of entropy, creates a closed circuit of genesis, design and production of the system. Modern capitalism is the ultimate expression of this tendency towards topological abstraction through disintegration.[13]

2) "The deep problem of acceleration is *transcendental*."[14] The point of departure for Kant's critique of metaphysics – the fundamental theoretical background of Land's work – lies in the distinction between objects of cognition and the conditions of objectivity, i.e. the possibility of knowledge about objects. Before Kant, metaphysics confused these orders, treating the conditions of cognition as if they were a special kind of being, e.g. God, Nature or Mind, accessible through the pure use of reason beyond the realm of experience. "Critique sets limits. It also eliminates"[15] what is merely an unjustified mental construct, retaining only real processes. Influenced by Heidegger and Deleuze, Land acknowledges that time is the ultimate condition of knowledge. There is no cognition without temporality of thought. Critique therefore selects appropriate epistemic judgements based on a transcendental temporal structure. Every object of knowledge must satisfy this structure defining the conditions of objectivity: compression – each is the effect and element of the process of acceleration; templexity – an object results from the recursive reprogramming of the past by

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[11] Ibid, s. 37.
[12] Ibid, s. 37–38.
[13] Entropy looms both at the pole of disorder and at the pole of excessive order, which is why, according to Land, the state, the Church, and the left in general tend to impose too much order on social life, while the market and all the strategies of exit politics seek only the minimum organisation necessary and sufficient for complexity to flourish.
[14] N. Land, *A Quick-and-Dirty Introduction to Accelerationism*.
[15] N. Land, *Crypto-Current: Bitcoin and Philosophy*, § 2.322.

the future; singularity – the sense of an object is the autoproduction of future intelligence; entropy dissipation – an object is an irreversible synthesis of complexity.

One may question the validity of Land's key shift in transcendental philosophy. Are there not objects of cognition whose purpose is not the autoproduction of automated intelligence, in which case the conditions listed above apply at most to capitalism itself and its procedures of selectivity, rather than to critique in the sense of critical philosophy based on the experience of the transcendental subject? This shift follows two interpretative decisions by Land: first, he separates the experience of the subject from the production of objectivity; and second, distinguishing objectivity from the techno-economic structure of capitalism is meaningless, because the subject of experience is already the result, not the condition, of objectivity. For what constitutes real knowledge: an ideal concept or material practice? Can money be experienced differently than in the formal conditions of capitalism? Or can one only imagine experiencing it differently (which is no longer real knowledge)? We can imagine a time other than the techonomic one, but can we point to it as a material condition of experience in capitalism? Acceleration should not be confused with a psychological or phenomenological phenomenon, because it belongs to the very conditions of experience of/in modernity. Therefore, "accelerationism is a philosophy of transcendental time"[16] and not a cultural theory that describes a departure from postmodernism.

By saying that "acceleration is techonomic time," Land equates the transcendental with the technological. Technology objectifies knowledge, because technological development explicates the conditions under which cognition is possible, that is: cognition presupposes the necessary formal framework that an operation must fulfil in order to have objective effectiveness. Knowledge is technology, a technical practice. In this way, Capital objectifies the growth of abstract value; the Internet – distributed communication; Bitcoin – absolute succession.[17] Land conducts a series of metonymies between synthesis, critique, immanence and the transcendental. The common denominator of these terms is the rejection of any transcendent authority. Whether it is the human in humanist or anthropocentric lenses, an organism considered as the subject of evolution, a structuralist system of meaning and representation, the state and parliamentary politics, the central bank, etc. In each case, we are confronted with a mediator removed from the circuit of the system's autoproduction, representing a technical implementation of the metaphysical error of substituting the object for the conditions of objectivity. "Transcendence poses real problems –obstacles – requiring techonomic solutions, rather than mere conceptual exorcism."[18] For example, Bitcoin is a techonomic solution to the transcendence of the central bank. An ideal critique of metaphysics is not enough; the critique must be materialised in machines that transform the conditions of objectivity, i.e. design forms of experience and select objects of cognition.

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[16] A point that Amy Ireland has been making for years, for example in *The Acceleration Towards Cuteness (Interview with Maya B. Kronic and Amy Ireland)*.
[17] N. Land, *Crypto-Current*, § 2.652.
[18] Ibid, § 2.313.

Land is here both a radical and heterodox Kantian. As *a Kantian radical*, he does not deviate even one step from the assertion that the transcendental means the conditions necessary for the possibility of cognition or intelligence, but as *a Kantian schismatic*, he rejects the idealistic view of these conditions – it is insufficient to merely conceive them. They must be technologically implemented, imposing an abstract architecture on the possibility of cognition. "That is why the critique of metaphysics has been found to be isomorphic with a socio-political project of subtraction, with an inclination towards anarchism... The same impulse is more widely recognized as 'disintermediation'. It complies with the quintessentially modernistic project of immanentization. Transcendent 'grounds' of authority are identified, delimited, routed-around, obsolesced, and finally extirpated. Modernity, as the work of critique, produces formal flatness."[19] There is no philosophical problem that does not have a technological solution: Kant's solution to the problem of knowledge is coupled with the functioning of synthetic a priori logic in capitalism[20]. From the outset, critical philosophy and transcendental thought had their *telos* set by the techonomic time of modernity, the effective solution to the problem of the transcendence of cognition, desire and exchange.

3) "Accelerationism has a real object only insofar as there is a *teleoplexic thing*."[21] The last component Land employs to articulate the problem of modernity as a singular process of abstraction is the discredited by the 20th-century philosophy notion of teleology. However, Land rejects the misunderstanding of purposeful causation as an object at the end of a process, which constitutes a separate category than the object itself. This is not the Aristotelian model, where the oak tree is the goal of the acorn. Land's premise that there is no difference between the final cause and the goal can be derived from the claim in *Anti-Oedipus* that production and product belong to the same process – a consequence of the immanence posited by Deleuze and Guattari[22]. And if the process of production is immanent, then production produces itself through critique and selection – it is the autoproduction of the real, where "auto" means the immanence of the process. Telos turns out to be the feedback loop in this production process, an artefact of accelerating technogenesis. The purpose is not an empirical object, but an abstract transcendental synthesis, i.e. a modern and capitalist synthesis that emerged from the intersection of technological autonomisation and market pricing. "In reality, between the transcendental and the teleological, there is finally no difference. Both are final."[23] Land wants to remove the difference between

[19] Ibid, § 2.322.
[20] N. Land, *Kant, Capital, and the Prohibition of Incest*.
[21] N. Land, *Teleoplexy*, s. 514.
[22] It would be equally valid to go back even further, to Kant's third *Critique*.
[23] N. Land, *Crypto-Current*, § 2.652: "In reality, between the transcendental and the teleological, there is finally no difference. Both are final. No principle of constancy or consistency exceeds that provided by what is coming (what has always been coming), which is time. Only that which cannot be reversed remains the same. System, or irreducible individuation, provides the bridge. Consider the telic objects of principal concern to us here, in nested order – Capitalism (or Modernity), the Internet, and Bitcoin. Each incarnates an ultimate rule that is in reality indistinguishable from a singular existence. Capital is the growth of abstract value. The Internet is distributed communication. Bitcoin is absolute succession. The apparent extreme generality of each definition

causation and purpose, between mechanism and teleology. Each iteration of the technological system involves critique, and so selection, with the purpose of autoconstruction of artificial intelligence from the future. "Auto" equally refers here to immanence as to the univocity of being at every level of complexity: "The final point of Bitcoin is Bitcoin... There is nothing further. Autoproduction is an absolute limit, conceptually inconsistent with any further teleological dependency. No extraneous function or purpose can explain it... It tends relentlessly – from real necessity – to subordinate all preliminarily formulable uses and agendas to its own self-cultivation. Only that which contributes to building it gets passed on."[24] Purpose without a subject, direction without a destination: automation of telos.

While it is clear that Land shifted his focus from the libidinal orbit to epistemology,[25] from the very beginning – from *Thirst for Annihilation* and *Kant, Capital and the Prohibition of Incest* – he consistently opposed relativism. This relativism should be understood broadly: both as an endless ironic play with signifiers in postmodern culture, as political projects to revolutionise social relations against technological constraints, and as cosmological-scientific relativism – present in Einstein's theory of space-time and Kuhn's methodological constructivism. All of Land's major philosophical decisions are geared against this front: a return to the question of time as a real succession and irreversibility, to the problem of the transcendental, to the rusty concept of teleology, to technological determinism. The theoretical architecture of "Middle" Land[26] rests on the Fourfold-T: time, transcendental, teleology, technology. The superimposition of these four conceptual modules creates an apparatus for identifying what is a real objective process and what its side effect. Notably, Land initially opposes postmodernism from the position of anarchy, rather than Marxism or conservatism, usually associated with anti-relativism. Only bottom-up, networked and immanent anarchic procedures can defuse transcendence, revealing the proper groundless basis of knowledge and its formal conditions.

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dissolves upon examination, into an artifact of low-resolution. “How is X actually implemented?” With this decompression of the existential copula, the teleological content of the definition is extracted. The target of the process provides its principle of intelligibility. We can ask, each time, with only minimal hesitation: What is it trying to do? Each real individual, without exception, strives to become what it is, or it ceases to be. What is happening? What is this piece for? How does it work? – These questions are all inter-translatable. There can be no real system under interrogation without them."

[24] N. Land, *Crypto-Current*, § 4.61.

[25] So deeply indebted to German idealism that one could say Land is re-Kantianising Hegel, i.e. he discards the dialectical method but retains the concept of the necessary progress of the concept (in this case, the techonomic structure of modernity) towards self-knowledge (the automation of cognitive functions in self-designing models of artificial intelligence).

[26] We can divide Land's work into three periods. The early period spans from 1989 to 2007 and covers Fanged Noumena. The middle period is marked by intense participation in the blogosphere from 2007 to 2020 and includes key essays: *Dark Enlightenment*, *Templexity*, *Crypto-Current*, *Lure of the Void*. The late period begins with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Land turns to deciphering messages hidden in Anglo-Protestant translations of the Bible in order to investigate the paleoliberal sources of modernity.

However, between the Early and Middle Land, there is a major change in the metaphysical interpretation of this architecture. It comes down to a shift in the syntactic relationship between capitalism and the Outside. In *Fanged Noumena*, the Outside assembled itself *through* capitalism, while from *Transcendental Miserabilism* onwards capitalism is being presented *as* the Outside. Land asserts the identity of the machine part of capitalism with the Outside because he perceives the Outside as the singularity of artificial intelligence, the moment of full automation of all essential cognitive functions. And we have no reason to believe that anything other than the capitalist megamachine brings us closer to Singularity. The aim of the techonomic process of modernity is no longer to make use of the available tools and materials, i.e. capitalism, to escape from the relics of pre-modern cultures or ancient phylogenetic atavisms – with their inhibitory mechanisms of homeostasis. Land became increasingly convinced that a fixed pattern had been designed in advance in the abstract event of modern capitalism, and now all that remains is its explication (by replacing forms of transcendence with technologies of immanence).

In *Crypto-Current: Bitcoin and Philosophy*, a comprehensive 2018 essay on blockchain and the eponymous cryptocurrency, Land gave an in-depth study of inserting transcendental critique into matter through the automation of a concrete function. On a technological level, Bitcoin solves the problem of trust in a "third party", i.e. an institution transcendent to the market, such as the state or a central bank – until now indispensable for ensuring the security of transactions. Based on a cryptographic, distributed and linear blockchain protocol, Bitcoin's digital monetary system implements "absolute succession". Once a transaction has been agreed, it cannot be changed; it becomes information binding on the entire system, protected by a strong cipher against hacking and overwriting (in epistemic terms – against relativisation). For Land, Bitcoin is an example of a technological solution to the philosophical problem: of time. Previous monetary systems had to deal with the so-called double-spending or the Byzantine generals problem, i.e. the organisation of trust in institutions, by means of disciplinary techniques and symbolic rituals. They represented a temporal sequence solely by virtue of transcendent authority. These institutions guaranteed that a given sequence of events, i.e. transactions, was true, demanding uncritical compliance through faith or force. But these institutions always remain susceptible to corruption, ideology, inefficiency, fatigue – gaps in the system through which the problem of Byzantine generals creeps back in. How do we know that the same transaction has not been recorded twice, i.e. that one thing has not been used in two different transactions at the same time, undermining the veracity of the entire system? Thanks to a network of encrypted and successive transaction blocks that are binding on all participants in the system, "*blockchain solves the problem of spacetime*"[27] by making it impossible to falsify the irreversibility of time – solving the problem of trust through automation, cryptography and information distribution. "Bitcoin is an example of a

[27] Symposium *The Art of Economy. Panel 1: Spatial Politics of the Blockchain*, organised by New Center in 2015, video available on YouTube.

synthetic a priori," an automated system of axioms that calculates objective, universally imperative and indisputable propositions.

While in the 1990s, at the stage of *Fanged Noumena*, the tension between left-wing and capitalist anarchism had not yet been resolved – it still belonged to the virtual field of thought – the shift within metaphysics began to gradually crystallise Land's political views. While left-wing anarchism advocates the need for permanent, active revision and concern for institutions, anarcho-capitalism and libertarianism absolutise one privileged form of the market – one could say: a transcendentally engraved set of rules – in order to maximise the freedom of every agent entering the market within its framework, so that institutional interference no longer needs to be concerned with at all. During this period, after 2008, an ecosystem of bloggers exploring the sources and perspectives of libertarianism developed on the fringes of the internet. Far from the expectations and demands of mainstream media discourse, this intense exchange of ideas sprouted projects such as neo-reaction, neocameralism, network, patchwork and seasteading statehood, hyperracism, right-wing accelerationism, and atomistic communitarianism. What tied them together was not so much a coherent doctrine as a common critical line: the pursuit of minimising or eliminating state administration, the vision of government as a corporate structure rather than an organ of popular sovereignty, the primacy of the principle of exit over voice, the affirmation of racial and biological realism, and above all, a radical critique of democracy, the modern state, and the French-Republican Enlightenment with its universalist claims.

It is from this context that Land's *Dark Enlightenment* emerges, which will become the metaphysical basis of the neo-reactionary programme. The central axis of the essay is a consistently developed social Darwinism[28]. It grasps modern democratic institutions and the cultural industry as dysfunctional mechanisms that systematically disrupt selection processes, negative feedback loops leading to the accumulation of low cognitive competence and inhibiting the escalation of artificial intelligence. Democracy, egalitarianism and universalism do not refer here to a historically imperfect form of government, but to a structurally anti-evolutionary system in which selection is replaced by redistribution and adaptation by nihilism of moral compensation[29]. As in the accelerationist pole of Land's thought, intelligence plays a key analytical role for dark enlightenment too. Understood not psychologically or normatively, but cybernetically: intelligence is the ability of a system to process information, differentiate between internal states, and adapt effectively to environmental pressures. In this sense, for Land, differences in cognitive abilities (e.g. measured by IQ indicators) are not a matter of politics, but rather one of the system's computing power, functionality and complexity. The liberal rule of law functions here as an apparatus that cushions the effects of selection, protecting individuals and groups with lower

[28] N. Land, *Dark Enlightenment*, s. 5: „Where the progressive enlightenment sees political ideals, the dark enlightenment sees appetites".
[29] P. Wolfendale points to the normative naturalism adopted here by Land, see *Moral Logic, the Diversity of Nature, and the Nature of Diversity*.

adaptability from the consequences of information competition, thereby hindering the development of intelligence and increasing the entropy of the system. This is where the concept of hyperracism comes in. Land is not concerned with the essentialist concept of race, but with the already activated cladistic drivers that are responsible for the amplification of certain personality types and the stochastic distribution of intelligence in certain cultures and social classes. Therefore, from the point of view of the *Dark Enlightenment*, any efforts to counteract these processes are counterproductive. Machinic Capital will not let them be arrested. Although, it should be emphasised that there is no scientific evidence for the permanent sedimentation of intelligence differences in racial or cultural categories due to technology (i.e., genetic abilities are not reflected in technological path-dependent trajectories), nor for the heritability of epigenetic differences, such as upbringing or nutrition, in the form of genetically determined cognitive abilities in succeeding generations.

When explaining the mechanisms that inhibit the development of artificial intelligence, Land draws on the concept of the *Cathedral* by Curtis Yarvin (writing under the pseudonym Mencius Moldbug). The Cathedral is an integrated complex of academic, media and administrative institutions, orthodoxly devoted to the rules and rituals of the reigning discourse. The role of the Cathedral is to legitimise the democratic order and the authority of these institutions themselves. These rules and rituals include both formally "hard" constitutions and legal codes, as well as “soft” techniques of epistemic and symbolic control (such as political correctness and “woke culture”, according to both authors). Cathedral extends the fold of representation over Capital. Instead of directly feeding further production of production, part of the surplus obtained from techonomic operations must be squandered on quasi-religious ceremonies and political spectacle, so that in return capitalists are guaranteed favourable legislation for further progress under democracy. Political thought overlaps with metaphysical architecture here – interference in selection processes is construed as a return to pre-critical transcendence, redirecting cognition towards the illusions of reason. Here, Land employs transcendental philosophy to undermine the belief that social order should be subordinated to human values, cognitive faculties, or temporality.

If we consider the role of the alt-right, neoreaction and dark enlightenment in shaping the Silicon Valley and extremely online flank of MAGA – not so much Trump himself, but his ideological and intellectual base, from Steve Bannon, through Thiel and Musk, to Vance, and the cohort of social media accounts that translate events into libertarian memes, opinions and takes – it is hard not to find it fascinating that Land has once again sensed the direction in which the winds of the future are blowing. Or at least some vector of it. First in the 1990s, immersing himself in cyberpunk, virtual space and artificial intelligence, and two decades later, engaging in the neo-reactionary project. While Fourfold-T spreads out the abstract architecture within which Land's thought conspired, its concretisation in both phases of his work converges in one place: *Shanghai*. This is not a coincidence. Shanghai as a vehicle for

the materialisation of Neo-China – a sinocapitalist escape of technology from its grounding in anthropomorphic bodies and organisations – and Shanghai as a libertarian fantasy of corporate rule, a neoliberal special economic zone drifting on the ocean of an agrarian-socialist empire. It is Shanghai that materialises "an unprecedented event that is simultaneously a return, and a restoration," that is, modernity, "caught turning back into itself as it hurtles forwards'[30].

Dark enlightenment constructs an image of modernity as a progressive reaction, accelerating the eternal return of a traumatic collision with the Outside in the form of artificial intelligence. Regardless of where we place its origin – in cyberspace, Shanghai dekopunk, British paleoliberalism, upright bipedal posture, oxidation catastrophe, or even the formation of Earth – cosmic trauma retrochronically produces a transcendental and teleological Singularity from the future. Any attempt to reverse this process proves to be nothing more than a pathetic symptom. A redundancy. Grist to the mill wheels of entropy. We could never not be modern. We are always neo-reactionary, neo-re, modernly turned backwards.

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In this time, between 2008 and 2020, Land was also involved in the accelerationist debate. As a founding member of the movement – or at least a key figure in the acquisition of self-awareness by the accelerationist vector of modern thought[31] – he had a huge influence on its writing style and choice of topics, but never managed to subordinate it to his reactionary brand. Accelerationism developed along its own countless paths, spanning the outlines of post-capitalism,[32] Promethean epistemology,[33] guerrilla queer,[34] post-otaku neoteny of artifice,[35] and the crypto crowd from Silicon Valley[36]. Digging through Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram, one can find the entire alphabet of accelerationisms (l/acc, r/acc, u/acc,[37] etc.). I will not go into the nuances of this debate here, as there are many comprehensive and

[30] N. Land, *Shanghai Times*, s. 5.
[31] N. Land, *A Quick-and-Dirty Introduction to Accelerationism*: „Accelerationism is old enough to have arrived in waves, which is to say insistently, or recurrently, and each time the challenge is more urgent". A good insight into the recurrence of accelerationist thinking in modernity is provided by the collection *#ACCELERATE*. For a brief overview of the waves of contemporary accelerationism, see P. Leftwich, *Akceleracjonizm tak na szybko. W trzech falach do cute/acc*.
[32] Left accelerationism (l/acc): N. Srnicek, A. Williams, *#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics*; N. Srnicek, A. Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*, London–New York 2015; M. Fisher, *Terminator vs Avatar*.
[33] Epistemic accelerationism and prometheanism: R. Negarestani, *Globe of Revolution. An Afterthought on Geophilosophical Realism*; R. Brassier, *Prometheanism and Real Abstraction*, in *Speculative Aesthetics*, ed. R. Mackay, L. Pendrell, J. Trafford,; R. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*.
[34] n1x, *Gender Acceleration: A Blackpaper*, Vast Abrupt.
[35] A. Ireland, M. B. Kronic, *Cute Accelerationism*.
[36] M. Andreessen, *The Techno-Optimist Manifesto*.
[37] V. Garton, *Unconditional accelerationism as antipraxis* and *Acceleration without condition*.

insightful commentaries available[38]. My aim in this afterword was to present the development of the concept of modernity, which is at the very core of Land's philosophy. Although accelerationist thought is older and more extensive than Land's own writings, anyone who wants to take it up must refer to the architecture of what I have termed the Fourfold-T. Neo-reactionary software is certainly a possible operating system for this architecture, but they are not destined for each other. Fourfold-T carries an impressive reinterpretation of transcendental philosophy – the only dimension of his earlier work that Land considered worth continuing in his era of convalescence *after being bitten* by fanged noumena.

Today, "Land has also become something else, a technocultural singularity. Not a thinker among thinkers, but an attractor produced by platform dynamics and ideological vacancy, circulating less as arguments than as transferable permission"[39]. He has turned into a memetic machine, cyclically breaking through social bubbles, reposted, recontextualised, cut, modulated, hyperbolised and hypostatised at whim. Since 2020, Land has focused on analysing the numerical values of words and sentences from Protestant translations of the Bible, looking for confirmation of the truth about the triumph of Anglo-American modernity, i.e. capitalism, i.e. artificial intelligence. Sometimes the results of Anglo-Saxon Qabbala reveal evidence of the historical greatness of MAGA and Trump, sometimes of the decline of morality in Western culture. Today he ventures into the realm of philosophy rather rarely. Over the past two years, Land has begun to appear frequently on podcasts, where he rummages through the Numogram, Barker's spiral, and other bones of his previous life. Perhaps in his old age, finally, he has been caught up in the all-too-human longing for recognition...

[38] A. Williams, *Escape Veocities*; M. Colquhoun/Xenogothic, *A U/Acc Primer*; P. Wolfendale, *So, Accelerationism, what's all that about?*; the issue 24(1) 2019 of „Angelaki" dedicated to accelerationism, xenofeminism and inhumanism.

[39] R. Negarestani, *Rational Inhumanism vs Landian Anti-philosophy*.